

Maine Telecommunications Relay Services Advisory Council

c/o William H. Nye, Chair

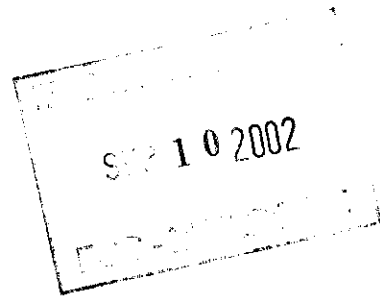
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August 21, 2002

Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20554

RE: Telecommunication Relay Service
Annual Log of Consumer Complaints
CC Docket No. 98-67

Dear Ms. Dortch:

We are writing to forward all the documents in our possession that contain records of consumer complaints (or comments) received between June 1, 2001, and May 31, 2002, about the operation of the Maine Relay Service. We enclose the following documents:

- a) Annual Consumer Complaints Summary, June 2001 - May 2002
(compiled by AT&T)
- b) List of Complaints received by Maine Center for Deafness (compiled by
Julia Bell, Outreach Manager at MCD)
- c) Letter Indicating no Complaints Received by Public Utilities Commission
(written by Derek Davidson, Director, Consumer Assistance Division)
- d) Customer Survey Results and Recommendations (compiled by the
Evaluation Committee of the Advisory Council to the Maine Relay
Service).

As you know, Maine presently does not have a single official who is responsible for the management of the Maine Relay Service. Instead, as established by statute, the Telecommunications Relay Services Advisory Council is required to evaluate the Maine Relay Service and to provide advice and recommendations to the State's relay service provider. (See

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35-A M.R.S.A. § 8704 (a copy of which is also enclosed)). The Advisory Council has been using a bi-annual survey as a tool to evaluate the operation of the Relay Service, to identify any problems, and to make needed improvements. As noted above, I enclose the most recent survey and the resulting recommendations adopted by the Advisory Council.

On a day-to-day basis, if a user of the Maine Relay Service has a complaint, he or she is encouraged to submit the complaint to the Consumer Assistance Division (CAD) at the Maine Public Utilities Commission -- the division that takes in all complaints about utility operation. When a complaint is filed at the PUC, the CAD contacts the utility involved and works to resolve the problem. In the past fourteen months the Consumer Assistance Division has received no complaints about the Maine Relay Service. Perhaps relay users have not understood where to direct their complaints. Some customers do make complaints to the staff of the Maine Center of Deafness (MCD), where Julia Bell serves as Outreach Manager for the Maine Relay Service. [Under a contract with AT&T, Maine's relay provider, MCD provides outreach services for the Relay Service.]

After talking with Joel Shifman of the Maine PUC staff, and after talking among ourselves, we have agreed that in order to have a more formalized list of complaints in the future, we will ask the Maine Center on Deafness to record all complaints (or comments) on the relay service in a log to be kept in the Maine Center on Deafness offices. At the end of each June - May year, a summary of the complaints received will be forwarded to the FCC, along with the list of complaints received by the State's relay provider, AT&T.

If you have any suggestions or questions about this proposal, please call or write.

Sincerely,

Committee on Evaluation
MERS Advisory Council



Lois Morin, Chair

E-mail: ptsvrilois@gwi.net

William C. Black, Esq., Member

E-mail: william.c.black@state.me.us

Enclosures

cc: Erica Meyers, FCC
Joel Shifman, PUC (w/o enclosures)
William Nye, Chair, Advisory Council (w/o enclosures)
Julia Bell, MCD (w/o enclosures)

MAINE RELAY SERVICE
ANNUAL CONSUMER COMPLAINTS SUMMARY
JUNE 2001 – MAY 2002

June 2001

TTY June 13, 2001

The customer complained the CA had not relayed the call verbatim.

Escalation: Received by the National Relay Center, PA and handled by the same.

Resolution: Apologized and assured the customer the complaint would be documented.

Contact Closed: June 13, 2001

FCC: Verbatim

TTY June 15, 2001

The customer complained the CA had not relayed the call verbatim.

Escalation: Received by the National Relay Center, PA and handled by the same.

Resolution: Apologized for the inconvenience, and assured the customer the CA's manager would follow up accordingly.

Contact Closed: June 15, 2001

FCC: Verbatim

July 2001 – Nothing to report

August 2001 – Nothing to report

September 2001 – Nothing to report

October 2001

Voice October 20, 2001

The customer complained the CA was not transparent during a 911 call.

Escalation: Received by the Relay Customer Service Line and handled by the National Customer Care Center.

Resolution: Apologized and explained CAs are to type verbatim what they hear. Explained the CA's manager would follow up with the CA.

Contact Closed: October 20, 2001

FCC: Transparency

November 2001 – Nothing to report

December 2001 – Nothing to report

January 2002

Voice January 17, 2002

The caller reported a complaint she had from a TTY user. He/she reported problems reaching relay when dialing 711 and the 800 number.

Escalation: Received by the Relay Customer Service Line and handled by the National Customer Care Center.

Resolution: Tested the numbers for Maine relay and did not find any problem. Requested more information from the TTY user to investigate.

**MAINE RELAY SERVICE
ANNUAL CONSUMER COMPLAINTS SUMMARY
JUNE 2001 – MAY 2002**

Contact Closed: January 17, 2002
FCC: Answer Performance

February 2002 – Nothing to report
March 2002 – Nothing to report

April 2002

Voice April 4, 2002

The customer complained she heard the CA discussing her phone conversation with others.

Escalation: Received by the National Relay Center, PA and handled by the National Customer Care Center.

Resolution: Apologized for the inconvenience, and assured the customer the CA's manager would follow up accordingly.

Contact Closed: April 4, 2002

FCC: Confidentiality

May 2002 – Nothing to report

Black, William C

From: Julia Bell [mcdmers@maine.rr.com]
Sent: Monday, August 12, 2002 2:39 PM
To: 'Black, William C'; 'Shifman, Joel'
Cc: 'Lois G. Morin (E-mail)'; 'William Nye (home) (E-mail)'; 'Johnson, Alice C.'
Subject: RE: Any Complaints about MERS? (2001-2002)

I looked back at my earlier email on this subject and realized I had not provided further information related to actual numbers.

In fact, we had no complaints about the relay service itself during the time period specified that had adequate information to report as an individual incident. I have record of the following:

10/4/01 - complaint from deaf person in Solon, Maine that relay service is not leaving messages on voice mail. In one instance, he reports he called the diabetes educator at the hospital in his area; when she was not in, he asked CA to leave message on her voice mail. Educator later told him she received no message. Also reported that several of his customers claimed to have requested that messages be left by CA when they called him via relay regarding his housepainting work. He did not receive any messages. Deaf person was unable to provide exact dates or times for any of these incidents.

11/20/01 -- call from Medical Call Center regarding repeated messages to "call again later" when trying to use the 1-800 relay access number (for voice callers).

12/18/01 -- deaf person called another private number via relay at 9 a.m. Line was busy, so CA tried call again. After second try, CA refused to continue trying. Deaf person indicated he called back about 30 minutes later, and different CA was willing to continue trying number until call went through.

12/19/01 - complaint initially from deaf woman regarding business owner unwilling to take relay call. I followed up with businessman, who explained that he is a sole proprietor and asked that the caller try again in five minutes because he was with a customer. He said he asks the same of hearing callers. At this point, according to hearing business owner, the CA became very rude and belligerent, and accused him of refusing to do business with deaf people. When I called deaf woman back to explain what had happened, she was very happy to know it was not business owner refusing to take her call. Neither caller or business owner had CA identifier to be able to file a complaint regarding that CA's behavior.

January, '02 - deaf man indicated he had tried to call a private party who was selling a used snowmobile. The CA indicated that the private party refused to take the call. Deaf man wants CA's to do better job of explaining what the relay service is so people will not hang up.

I don't know if you even want to count those, Joel, since they are not specific enough to identify all the who, what, why, etc. But I have listed them off, just in case. Other than that, we have a very limited number of negative comments about the relay service in the survey results from last fall, if you want to include them in any narrative you provide with your report to the FCC.

Most of our calls about the relay service are related to businesses/medical offices/etc. refusing to take a relay call. In each of those cases, I follow up with the offending party. The other type of call this past year has been about 711 not working - all of those problems have been "in-state" problems, and mostly related to specific

phone systems not being programmed correctly.

Let me know if you need additional information from me.

Julia Bell

Manager, Public Relations and Administration

Maine Center on Deafness -- providing information,
empowerment, advocacy and referral services throughout Maine.



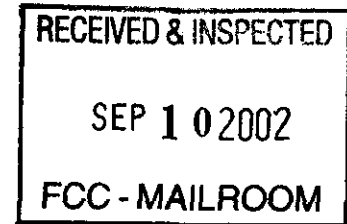
THOMAS L. WELCH

CHAIRMAN

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WILLIAM M. NUGENT
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COMMISSIONERS



August 20, 2002

Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th St., SW
Washington, D.C. 20554

RE: Telecommunications Relay Service
Annual Log of Consumer Complaints
CC Docket No. 98-67

Dear Ms. Dortch:

As the person in charge of the Consumer Assistance Division at the Maine Public Utilities Commission, I am writing to say that for the period between June, 2001 and May, 2002, the Maine Public Utilities Commission (and its Consumer Assistance Division) received no complaints from customers about either the Maine Relay Service or TTY calls.

If anyone at the FCC has questions about our role or our recordkeeping, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Derek Davidson



100% RECYCLED PAPER

FINAL
6/6/02 hand-out

2001
MERS
USERS'
SURVEY

X

2001 MERS USERS' SURVEY

Responses

Contact group	# sent	# returned	% return
Deaf individuals	100	41	41%
Hearing individuals	40	12	30%
Business	40	9	23%
Voice Carryover Users	20	6	30%
Total	200	68	34%

Cities/Towns included in response group:

Alfred (1)	Etna (1)	Lewiston (2)	Scarborough (2)
Auburn (7)	Gardiner (1)	Limington (1)	Sebago (3)
Augusta (1)	Glenburn (1)	Minot (1)	Sidney (1)
Bangor (6)	Gorham (2)	Pittsfield (1)	South China (1)
Bridgton (1)	Gray (1)	Portland (11)	South Portland (2)
Bucksport (1)	Greene (1)	Pownal (1)	Van Buren (1)
Calais (1)	Hampden (1)	Presque Isle (1)	Westbrook (1)
Carmel (1)	Harpswell (1)	Saco (1)	Windham (2)
East Waterboro (1)	Hudson (1)	Sanford (1)	Yarmouth (1)
Embden (1)	Jay (1)		unknown (1)

2001 MERS USERS' SURVEY

Features & Relay #'s used

Question: What feature is most important to your use of MERS?

	TTY	Voice	VCO
Deaf responses	39	4	2
HOH responses	1	1	3
Hearing responses	6	7	0
Business responses*	4	3	0

* includes both hearing and deaf responses

Question: Which relay number do you use regularly?

	711	955 numbers	800 numbers
Deaf responses	25	1	18
Hearing responses	4	3	8
HOH responses	4	1	2
All responses	33*	5	28*

* some respondents listed both 711 and 800, in some cases with explanation that 711 doesn't work for cell phones or in specific locations

2001 MERS USERS' SURVEY

Comfort w/ MERS & AT&T Profile

How Do You Feel About Using MERS? (59 responses)

	Comfortable w/ MERS	Don't Know How to Use	Want More Experience	Not Comfortable
Deaf	32	2	3	1
Hard of Hearing	5	0	0	0
Hearing	15	0	0	1
All Responses	52	2	3	2

Are You Satisfied with ATT Profile via MERS? (58 responses)

	Yes	No	Don't Know What It Is
Deaf	19	5	15
Hard of Hearing	4	0	1
Hearing	7	0	7
All Responses	30	5	23

Among deaf respondents, 51% either don't know what ATT Profile is or are not satisfied with it.

2001 MERS USERS' SURVEY **Problems with 711**

Question: Do you have any problems dialing #711 to reach MERS?

	Yes	No
Deaf	14	20
Hearing	3	13
Hard-of-Hearing	0	5
Total	17	38

Comments:

1. not try yet
2. sometimes I do not receive a response of any kind
3. my tty will not work with 711
4. too slow to answer, always busy
5. sometimes it takes a little longer to wait
6. they take forever to respond
7. at my work, it won't go thru so I use 1-800-#
8. when I use cell phone, can't reach 711
9. can't use on cell phone
10. slow answer
11. waiting too long
12. not connecting
13. long wait, sometimes no answer
14. no work about 4:30 a.m.
15. can't get thru
16. cell phone - doesn't work
17. at school phones don't work, have to use 1-800
18. had problem with cell phone

2001 MERS USERS' SURVEY
Problems with 1-800 #'s

Question: Do you have any problems dialing 800 numbers via MERS?

	Yes	No
Deaf	7	33
Hearing	0	14
Hard-of-Hearing	0	5
Total	7	52

Comments related to "Yes" answer

1. I have hard time to get thru
2. because I type a long story one time
3. Get immediate answer
4. sometimes have to wait turn
5. often slow, did not answer sometimes
6. can't connect many times

2001 MERS USERS' SURVEY
Contacting MERS -- busy signal and wait time

Question: When you dial the number for MERS, do you ever get a busy signal and have to redial?

	Yes	No
Using 711	12	15
Using 955	2	3
Using 1-800	10	17
Total	24	35

Question: When you call MERS, do you get a response, more than once, that says "Please hold for the next available CA" ?

(58 responses)

	Yes	No
Total	34	24

Range of "yes" answers:

1 - 2 times	3
2 - 3 times	8
3 - 4 times	7
5 - 9 times	4
10 - 12 times	2
sometimes	2
few times	3
a lot	2

2001 MERS USERS' SURVEY

Problems with Communication Assistants

Question: Have you had any problems with the Communication Assistants (Cas) during this year (2001)?

	Yes	No
Deaf	10	28
Hearing	2	13
Hard-of-Hearing	2	3
Total	14	44

Explanations with "Yes" Answers

some were very cold and monotonous

they hang up before I am done

problem w/ phone line or tty device, sometime CA doesn't know how to dial in local area with 800's

they bill me for what I didn't use - operator assisted calls

misspelled names

sometimes they are rather confusing. I think they make stuff up sometimes.

not enough respond, slow not move quick when communicate

dialed wrong number twice

they keep asking me to repeat from garbled msgs.

wait too long to relay what deaf person is typing, should speak as soon as deaf person begins typing

2001 MERS USERS' SURVEY
Problems with Local Phone Company

Question: As a MERS user, do you have any problems with your local telephone company, such as billing, special discount, talking with telephone employees, directory instructions, or other problem?

	Yes	No
Deaf	6	32
Hearing	0	14
Hard-of-Hearing	2	6
Total	8	52

Comments regarding problems:

Deaf person: double charge me for local calls for one LD call; charge me for operator assisted calls which were not.

Deaf person: sometimes I suspected that it wasn't honest bills; it is very hard to track with bills.

Deaf person: I thought my billing discount was 70%; I don't understand bills

Deaf person: discounts get taken off only some months; phone cards for portable ttys difficult to use.

Deaf person: 70 percent off not working

Deaf person: "they don't say much; not comfort with us much"

HOH person: it should cost much less because of time on TTY because of deafness

HOH person: wouldn't give discount

2001 MERS USERS' SURVEY
Suggestions

1. show that intonation is healthy & that they do not have to robotic
2. need to understand how our feeling as response, be nice as listen and be patient as friendly, know as
3. experience w/ deaf people
4. Omit "Waiting for" I like to see faster response than waiting when I call someone & they have answering machine. I want to type msg as CA follow me what I say then hang up. Not wait for CA to re-do msg. -- waste my time, charge more money as every min
5. workshop on language communication
6. improve fast service!!
7. make sure the other line say the same thing
8. pls stop w/ pls hold for available CA -- I hate it!
9. I liked the ideaf of via internet for relay on computer
10. do more surveys, push MERS ATT to improve svcs. & faster respond to 711, and 711 doesn't work with cell phones
11. stubborn svcs.; they don't care
12. need to speed up response, like what if emergency
13. more outreach to public
14. better screening & training for CA's
15. better training in people skills for CA's & typing skills
16. does great job
17. need more of outreach & publicity. I regularly get calls from agencies/professionals w/ questions about relay.

Maine Telecommunication Relay Services Advisory Council
Evaluation Committee Report and Recommendations

The Evaluation Committee met two times to review the information gleaned from the survey forms mailed to MERS users. Based on the survey data, the Committee has developed several recommendations to present to the full TRS Advisory Council.

The MERS users who received survey forms were selected on a random basis from the Maine TTY directory. Two hundred surveys were mailed out, including 100 to deaf individuals, 40 to hearing persons, 40 to businesses and government offices, and 20 to Voice Carryover Users.

The Evaluation Committee submits the following recommendations to the Advisory Council for approval, based on the survey results:

Recommendation One:

The Advisory Council recommends and requests that the Public Utilities Commission annually inform and remind each of the competitive local exchange carriers (CLECs) operating in Maine that its telephone system must be capable of directing 711 calls to the Maine Relay Service.

Recommendation Two:

Based on recent survey results, the Advisory Council recommends that AT&T continue to provide training to its Communication Assistants (CA's) in "people skills" and attitude.

Recommendation Three:

Information collected from a recent survey of MERS users indicates that a good number of callers experience a long waiting time before the call connects to the Relay Service and up-front automation (UFA) begins. The Advisory Council requests that AT&T condition or adjust its up-front automation so that phone calls to MERS are answered after no more than three rings.

Recommendation Four:

The Federal Communications Commission requires that the TRS answer 85% of all calls within 10 seconds, so that each caller's call is immediately placed. According to the technical standards established by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), the 10-second period begins when the call is delivered to the TRS center's network and ends when a CA answers and is prepared to place the call.

Information provided by AT&T indicates that its "speed of answer" data are developed by measuring the time from when UFA ends until the point when a CA answers the call. That time period appears to measure only a portion of the call process included in the FCC requirement.

The Advisory Council requests that AT&T verify that its "speed of answer" measurement and statistics are in accordance with FCC requirements. If the AT&T statistics do not measure the full time-frame required by the FCC, the Council requests that AT&T alter its measurement so that its answer performance reports will comply with FCC requirements.

Recommendations Five

Recent survey results and other input from TRS users in Maine indicate that relay calls placed by dialing 711 take a longer time to be answered than calls placed by dialing one of the 1-800 access numbers. The Advisory Council requests that AT&T investigate whether and why this is true. If so, we ask whether there are actions that AT&T can take to shorten the length of time that it takes for a 711 call to be connected to the relay service and start UFA.

Recommendation Six

Recent survey results indicate that MERS users may find it difficult to determine if their telephone bills reflect application of the 70% discount for intrastate long distance telephone calls. The Advisory Council recommends that the Telephone Association of Maine (TAM) Investigate its members' billing processes to determine the feasibility of adopting a method to assure that customers receive information with each applicable billing statement that indicates that a 70 percent discount has been applied to qualified calls.

Recommendation Seven

Survey results indicated that approximately 50% of deaf MERS users are not using AT&T Profile successfully. MERS users either report that they are not satisfied with Profile or that they do not know what it is. The Advisory Council therefore recommends that the MERS Outreach Program provide additional information and assistance to the Deaf Community so that its members can benefit from the faster processing of relay calls made possible by using the Profile mechanism.

Prev: Chapter 87 §8703
Next: Chapter 89 §8901

**Title 35-A: PUBLIC UTILITIES (HEADING: PL 1987, c. 141,
Pt. A, @6 (new))**

Part 7: TELECOMMUNICATIONS (HEADING: PL 1987, c.
141, Pt. A, @6 (new))

**Chapter 87: TELECOMMUNICATIONS RELAY SERVICES
(HEADING: PL 1989, c. 851, @7 (new))**

§8704. Advisory Council

The Telecommunications Relay Services Advisory Council, as established by Title 5, section 12004-I, subsection 74-A-1, shall evaluate telecommunications relay services in this State and provide advice to providers of telecommunications relay services. [1989, c. 851, §7 (new).]

1. Membership. The advisory council consists of 12 members as follows:

A. The Director of the Division of Deafness, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, Department of Labor, or a designee; [2001, c. 377, §3 (amd).]

B. The Chair of the Advisory Committee to the Division of Deafness established by Title 5, section 12004-I, subsection 40, or a designee; [1989, c. 851, §7 (new).]

C. One member from the Public Utilities Commission, appointed by the commissioners; [1989, c. 851, §7 (new).]

D. One member from the office of the Public Advocate, appointed by the Public Advocate; and [1989, c. 851, §7 (new).]

E. Eight members appointed by the Governor as follows:

(1) One member from the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf;

(2) One member from a statewide association for the deaf;

(3) One member from a center on deafness;

(4) One member from a company providing telecommunications relay service in this State;

(5) One member of a telephone association in this State;

(6) Two members from the general public who must rely on TTYs for telecommunications; and

7. One member representing a cellular or wireless service provider.
[2001, c. 377, §3 (amd).]
[2001, c. 377, §3 (amd).]

2. Compensation. Compensation is not authorized. [1989, c. 851, §7 (new).]

3. Technical assistance. The commission shall provide technical assistance to the advisory council. [1989, c. 851, §7 (new).]

4. Appointment of chair and vice-chair. The members shall annually elect a chair and a vice-chair from among the membership. The vice-chair shall serve as acting chair in the absence of the chair. The council shall meet at the call of the chair but no fewer than 4 times during the calendar year. The chair may delegate, as necessary, duties to members to carry out the functions of the council. [1989, c. 851, §7 (new).]

5. Powers and duties. The advisory council shall evaluate telecommunications relay services in this State and shall advise providers of telecommunications relay services regarding telecommunications relay service matters, including, but not limited to, the development of training standards and an evaluation of the service being provided, including the quality and availability of that service. [1989, c. 851, §7 (new).]

Section History:

PL 1989, Ch. 851, §7 (NEW).

PL 1993, Ch. 708, §J12 (AMD).

PL 2001, Ch. 377, §3 (AMD).